

THE PRETENDERS

ACT I

SCENE I

(SCENE.—The churchyard of Christ Church in Bergen. In the background the main entrance of the church faces the audience. In the foreground, on the left, are standing HAAKON, MAGFINN, VEGARD VÆRADAL, IVAR BODDE and other vassals and chieftains; opposite them, on the right, SKULE, GREGORIUS JONSSON, PAUL FLIDA, and others of SKULE'S men. Farther back on the same side are seen SIGURD THE RIBBUNG and his followers, and, standing apart from them, GUTHORM INGESSON with other chieftains. The approach to the church is guarded by armed men; the churchyard is crowded with people, and many are perched on the trees and church walls. Every one seems to be in the greatest suspense, as if waiting for something to happen. Bells are ringing in all the church steeples in the town, far and near.)

Skule (to GREGORIUS JONSSON, in a low voice full of impatience). Why are they so slow in there?

Gregorius. Hush!—I hear the psalm beginning. (The sound of trumpets is heard through the closed doors of the church; then the choir of monks and nuns, chanting the "Domine cœli." Meanwhile the doors of the church are thrown open from within, and BISHOP NICHOLAS appears in the porch, surrounded by priests and friars.)

Bishop Nicholas (stepping forward and raising his crozier). Now is Inga of Varteig submitting to the Ordeal of the Iron on behalf of Haakon, heir to the crown! (The church doors are shut again; the chanting is still heard from within.)

Gregorius Jonsson (in a low voice, to SKULE). Pray to St. Olaf to defend the right.

Skule (hastily and with a gesture of refusal). Not now. It were best not to put him in mind of me.